

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES

February 4, 2010

Members Present: Daniel Clapp, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Doris Holden, Rosemary Kofler, Mary Jane Laus, Barbara Sutherland, Kathy Koplow

Absent: Juana Trujillo

Select Board Liaison: absent

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Priscilla Robbins (Senior Aide Program)

Guests: Larry Shaffer, Town Manager, Barbara Slovin, President of the Friends of the Amherst SC; Shirley Lauder, Vice-President and Assistant Treasurer of the Friends; Richard Kofler, Lillian Scott, Joelle Adlerblum, Cathy Darcy

Welcome: Dan Clapp, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:35 AM. Dan reminded COA members to complete the required State Ethics Commission Conflict of Interest Training Program online.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the January 7, 2010 meeting were approved and accepted.

Friends' Treasurer Report:

Doris provided a handout showing \$15,672.03 in the checking account and \$69,723.10 in the investment account. The Friends made a \$100 contribution to the Dakin Animal Shelter in appreciation for the time and assistance donated by Judy Smith toward setting up the Quick Book accounts for the Friends.

The Friends is expecting a donation from the Florence Savings Bank.

Nancy reported that donations to the Friends for FY2010 is \$8,893 thus far - \$6,255 of that is since the request for membership donations went out in the December/January Senior Spirit.

Conversation with Larry Shaffer:

Larry said that conversations continue between Kay Zlogar, Linda Chalfant, Julie Federman and Nancy regarding use of space at Bangs. Larry has asked them to also discuss operational issues and opportunities that might exist for efficiencies and collaborations amongst the departments. Larry will provide only a philosophical approach to the situation. He needs the department heads to do the talking about the practical implications for any kind of implementation. All three departments will continue to be challenged by budgetary issues and will need to work closely together to ascertain how their assets can be employed mutually/collaboratively. The principle asset is the Bangs Center and how to use the space. Larry, Kay and Julie walked through Bangs, looking at space and considering the many ideas that have come up for use of the space.

Dan asked about any change in the use of Room 101. Larry said nothing is definite yet. His focus is on the entire building, not just 101. Reconfiguration of all of Bangs including space the Senior Center currently occupies is being considered. Larry would like to see the space on the second floor, which was vacated by the Health Department, utilized by July 1.

Joel asked if the departments within Bangs would maintain autonomy. Larry said "*They may or may not. Everything is open. The departments will always be the same but in terms of the department heads, who they report to and how. . . we're going to take a look at it.*" There are a number of ways to organize it. One could have an Assistant Town Manager oversee all three departments. One could have Assistant Departments Heads running those departments. A good example of what the organization could look like is the Planning, Conservation,

Inspections and Community Development – four functions under one department. That has been very successful. The transition took several years and changes are still being made. There are fiscal pressures, building issues need to be resolved, and organizationally we could be more streamlined, more collaborative and share at least clerical and administration. There are various degrees of acceptance. Some folks embrace change and understand its importance, others find it threatening and challenging. In order to accommodate the latter, we will insist on their full participation so that the end product is one in which they had full opportunity to have input into and full opportunity to shape the end product. We are working to bring departments together so they can share mutual assets to the benefit of all. It is hard to say exactly where we are with the budget next year. We prepared our budget this year assuming a 10% net loss. State support will allow us to adjust for a 5 % loss of revenue instead of 10% so we can restore some of the cuts for safety personnel. A lot depends on State revenue and the override.

Dan emphasized the importance of the COA to advocate for budgetary support of the Senior Center staff.

Joelle Adlerblum, guest, spoke to Larry about not “seeing seniors as other departments”. The Senior Center is truly essential for many elders. For example, Joelle has no family locally therefore she relies on the Senior Center for activities, use of computers and meals when she is ill. Nancy, Maura and Karen are all essential in setting up the programs and activities, finding help for those in need and assisting seniors.

Larry assured us that Nancy is part of the process of determining changes. She is a tireless advocate for seniors and seniors’ programs.

Jeanne Ryan from Cooley Dickinson Hospital has offered the Senior Center some exercise equipment. Nancy will meet with Jeanne today to discuss it further. James Fitzgerald, physical fitness trainer, would be interested in teaching and training seniors on the use of the machines if they were accepted. A cardiac rehab program is not part of the plan.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

First Annual Amherst Follies:

Barbara Slovin reported about the professional program that Donna Lee is planning for April 25, 2010. Tickets will be \$10 for adults and \$7 for children 12 and under. There will be a pasta dinner on March 6 at Bangs with food provided by Amherst College students and Pasta E Basta. Donna is arranging some entertainment for that night as a “taste of April 25”. Tickets for March 6 will be \$10 for the dinner and entertainment. We hope to raise enough money on March 6 to cover all expenses of the April 25 show.

SHAG (Senior Health Advisory Group):

Dan reported from the meeting minutes. Discussed were the contributions of Lisa Raskin and her students benefiting seniors. SHAG continues to look at continuity of care issues for elders following hospital discharge. Bessie Young, an Amherst College also does a great deal to benefit seniors. She is making all the arrangements for the March 6 dinner, for instance.

Ad Hoc Survey Committee:

Joel reported. The Ad Hoc committee received copies of the draft report on the 2010 survey. It includes a brief description of how the survey was conducted. The report deals with mid-lifers and seniors by section:

- 1) The socio and economic profile of mid-lifers and seniors.
- 2) How they utilize the services at the Senior Center, how happy they are with the services, which additional services they would like and if they don’t use the SC, why not.
- 3) The assistance seniors and mid-lifers provide to others.
- 4) The assistance they themselves receive from others and the adequacy of that assistance.

5) The social contacts available to seniors and mid-lifers and if they feel isolated.

6) Their health and habits.

7) Their plans for the future.

The "adjusted" response rate was almost 44% overall out of 1800 questionnaires sent. The responses showed a high level of education in Amherst. Many had high incomes but 14% had annual incomes less than \$30,000 and almost 25% had annual incomes below \$40,000. On the basis of that one could estimate that as many as 1000 elders in Amherst could have great difficulty making ends meet. Of the 722 responses, two-thirds over age 65 have used one or more of the SC services; more than three-fourths over age 75 have used the services.

(Sandra Lapollo, Director of the Chicopee SC, reports that if 25% of the senior community uses the SC that is considered good.)

Our users report being "highly satisfied" with the services. The overall rate of satisfaction was more than 90%.

More than 90% of those over age 60 read the *Senior Spirit* newsletter.

In conclusion, it is evident that our SC is doing an excellent job. Joel emphasized how fortunate we are to have Nancy, Maura and Karen here.

The Ad Hoc Committee will recommend to Randall Stokes some further cross-correlations. The final report will hopefully be ready in March.

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Joan reported. The last meeting included a tour of the Riverside building, which is the headquarters for HVES.

There are now 105 people on the waiting list for care-giving services at HVES.

Maura was informed by John Lutz that the HVES budget for FY11 will be level-funded. Care-giving services are determined by priority and go first to those discharged from a hospital or nursing home or those under protective service.

NEW BUSINESS

Karen announced that the Census Bureau would have a table in the lobby of Bangs 15 hours/week from March 19 through April for those who need help with filling out the census.

Nancy remarked on the budget. Currently it includes salary for Nancy, Maura and half of Karen's plus benefits (the remainder of Karen's salary is covered by the Formula Grant). We have \$1000 for office supplies, a small amount for membership dues in the MCOA and nothing for activities. Larry has recommended cutting \$11,000 from Karen's salary, reducing her hours to 24.5 per week.

Nancy stressed that Karen is an essential full-time partner. She runs the office and her output is enormous for the hours she works. When she is out, her work just piles up – there is no one to cover for her. Therefore it is of grave concern to Nancy and Maura as to how they can manage without Karen full time.

Larry has prepared a 'restoration look' as to what cuts can be restored if an override of \$1.9 million passes. Out of about 30 items, Karen's salary is three items from the bottom of that list.

Nancy has wondered about the possibility of the Friends paying the \$11,000 to keep Karen full time.

Nancy will also ask the Friends about getting a car insured by the Town to deliver meals, run errands, etc.

Dan asked about selling the SC van. Nancy said there is a lien on the van for the first 7 years of ownership, therefore, if we sold it now about 10% of the sale price would go to the Town. After 7 years (the end of 2010) we would get 100% of the sale price.

STAFF REPORTS

Maura reported. The Emergency Fund has been used for three people recently to help with utility bills and medical bills. Some loans are being paid back.

Maura is interested in beginning Art Workshops in "creating community" and helping residents to come together within Clark House, Ann Whalen and Chestnut Court. She has asked John Lutz for funding from HVES. Maura has met with Dan Ladd who will supply materials.

Participants will create art works that will draw on their own experiences. The project is based on a program in Vermont called GRACE, Grass Roots Art and Community Effort.

Nancy expressed appreciation to the COA. Dan reiterated that our role is to advocate, advise and assist.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:55 AM.

The next meeting of the COA will be held on March 4, 2010 at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the January 7, 2010 meeting were delivered to the Select Board Office to be filed.